

News Release

NEW YORK WING
CIVIL AIR PATROL
U.S. AIR FORCE AUXILIARY

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HOMELAND SECURITY EXERCISE

Civil Air Patrol's NY Wing Conducts Rapid Response Reconnaissance Missions

Members of the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) throughout New York conducted Rapid Response Missions Friday and Saturday (Feb. 14-15) as part of a state-wide Homeland Security exercise.

Given a practice scenario in which authorities receive a credible threat of imminent terrorist activity in New York State, aircrews from Long Island to Western New York, plus some ground teams, were deployed to survey and photograph potential terrorist targets, including power plants, windmill farms, dams on reservoirs, and hospitals. One aircrew also took the time to look for ice jams on the Saranac River as a courtesy to Plattsburgh city officials concerned about flooding.

Dubbed "Operation Cold Snap," the exercise was a timed one, explained Lt. Col. Steve Perta of Rome, one of the mission pilots and director of operations for CAP's New York Wing. "From the time we got the call, we were timed on how fast our crews were deployed, and how long it took to complete the mission and transmit images and information to a central base of operations." In a real threat, the images and information could go directly to federal and state authorities for analysis.

Lt. Col. William Hughes of Walworth, the New York Wing's director of emergency services and exercise coordinator, explained that crews were "directed to sites similar to those that they may be called on for assessment during an actual event." He said they stayed away from higher profile areas to avoid undue concern by the public.

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"The objective of the exercise," said Lt. Col. Hughes, "is to keep the teams proficient in reconnaissance, photography, use of the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) systems, transmitting images, and performing base staff functions for coordination, communications and control."

The teams are rated on clarity of image, information conveyed, timeliness, and supporting documentation, he said. Nine Groups, which oversee 58 squadrons across the state, participated, as follows:

- Long Island Group, Long Island McArthur Airport.
- New York City Group, Teterboro Airport.
- South Eastern Group, Poughkeepsie Airport.
- Catskill Mountain Group, Sullivan County Airport (Wurtsboro).
- Mid Eastern Group, Schenectady Airport and Clinton County Airport (Plattsburgh).
- Central NY Group, Syracuse/Hancock Airport and Oneida County Airport (Oriskany).
- South Central Group, Tri-Cities Airport (Binghamton).
- Finger Lakes Group, Rochester Airport.
- Western New York Group, Dunkirk Airport and Akron Airport.

"Overall, I thought it went very well," Lt. Col. Hughes noted. "Some missions went extremely well. Mother nature sure provided the 'cold', with temperatures hovering around zero, and CAP provided the 'snap' with the photos and prompt response."

Some crews were delayed when they had to de-ice their planes, he said, and one airport was snowed in.

"Usually, with our search missions, there's a sense of urgency," Lt. Col. Hughes said. "Homeland Security is as much about observing and documenting as it is about getting there quickly."

Even though Homeland Security is a new arena, aerial reconnaissance is nothing new in the history of the Civil Air Patrol. CAP flew over 87,000 anti-submarine and border patrol sorties during the Second World War, earning its members the nickname, "The Flying Minutemen". CAP aircraft and crews across the state routinely respond to search-and-rescue and disaster relief needs. The New York Wing has a fleet of 17 planes.

The Civil Air Patrol, the official Air Force Auxiliary, is a nonprofit organization chartered by Congress. It performs 95% of inland search-and-rescue missions in the continental United States, as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center at Langley Air Force Base, VA. CAP is often called upon during natural and other disasters such as the attack on the World Trade Center, flooding of the Mississippi River, wind storms, and forest fires. Volunteers also take a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to America's youth through CAP cadet programs.

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